

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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January 13, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues;

In a hasty, urgent, manner we have assembled some information regarding the Haitian earthquake. All of us that have, in the past, visited or worked in Haiti know that the baseline, pre-earthquake, for basic public goods is extremely poor, and certainly the worst in the Americas. Whether the issue is drinking water, hospital services, education, roads and transportation, infrastructure, housing, nutrition, infectious diseases, or basic human rights, Haiti always ranked in desperate straits.

Many have long referred to Haiti as a “failed state.”

The U.S. Geological Survey estimates the earthquake that struck just before 5 pm yesterday reached 7.0 to 7.5 on the Richter scale, with aftershocks as high as 6.0. To put that number in perspective, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake that struck the Bay Area during the San Francisco/Oakland World Series baseball game measured 7.0 on the Richter scale. It brought down a segment of the Bay Bridge and the San Francisco Embarcadero highway, killed sixty-three people, and left some 10,000 people homeless.

The Haitian quake appears to have struck directly beneath the capital city, Port-au-Prince, with a population of roughly two million. Two factors have conspired to make this earthquake far more severe in terms of human impact than its nearly same-strength Loma Prieta predecessor. First, the natural setting and geology are problematic. Second, the quality of building construction has been very poor, not only over recent years but going back to the early twentieth century (as described in 1920 geology reports). Port-au-Prince is a port city, with about half the buildings located at the mouth of the bay in a relatively flat space. Much of that land is fill and silt runoff and may be subject to liquefaction. The rest of the city climbs the mountains that encircle the bay, and have long been subject to landslides and instability. Visitors to Port-au-Prince are always struck by the winding roads up the mountains that seem to take the viewer from desperate Cite Soleil poverty at sea level up to wealthy gated estates at the peaks.

Eyewitness accounts describe Port-au-Prince as “devastated,” “destroyed,” even “gone.”

The Global Health Program has reached out to our members, humanitarian relief organizations, and the U.S. Navy in hopes of providing a quick-and-dirty liaison between responders. *We are not suggesting where readers might wish to send donations, or whose work is “better” – the object is to help link responders and give our readers a sense of the landscape of health and humanitarian action.* Therefore, attached is a table that lists many organizations, notes their areas of expertise in Haiti at this moment,

and provides a means to communicate with them. Some of these groups are already on the ground in Haiti (Medecins Sans Frontieres, for example, had eight hundred healthcare personnel working in Haiti when the earthquake struck); some have just arrived in the country (the University of Miami managed to fly in a physician team by private jet this morning); and others are poised and ready to launch as soon as they can establish air or ship transport.

On the health side of this equation, a few points are worth noting:

- Hospital and clinical facilities in Port-au-Prince have long suffered infrastructural deficiencies, electrical blackouts, water problems, and general impoverishment. Though the city has dedicated medical personnel, Haiti has long depended on large numbers of foreign volunteers and relief workers to augment indigenous capacity. First word out of Haiti is that even those beleaguered facilities are now either severely damaged or utterly destroyed. One of the city's major hospitals is said to have collapsed, with the remaining structure unsafe.
- Haiti has long held the distinction in the Americas of having the least amount of safe water and sewage systems in the hemisphere. Water and sewer lines considered dangerously inadequate in the 1950s engineering assessments have only deteriorated over the decades. It must be assumed, until proven otherwise, that the few drinking water and sewer systems deemed functional before the earthquake are no longer usable. The next ten-day weather forecasts for Port-au-Prince are **HOT**, with the heat index holding in the low-to-mid 90s every day. Dehydration will undoubtedly become a serious issue over the next 24-36 hours.
- Communications were spotty, at best, before the mobile phones revolution hit Haiti. Land lines were notoriously bad, with intermittent service. Today communication is a genuine crisis as cell towers appear to have been damaged and mobile phones are not working. Lack of phone service has two immediate health impacts. First, distraught families both in Haiti and in the United States cannot find one another, creating tremendous psychological distress. Second, relief workers are having difficulty coordinating their responses.
- Food access has also been a problem for the poor of Port-au-Prince; now it is a disaster.
- Trauma care requires electricity, water, surgical facilities, and all of the infrastructure and technology that makes operating theaters safely functional. Haiti has suffered scarcities of such basic ingredients of emergency and trauma care for a long time. Initial Red Cross reports indicate much of the capital's trauma care equipment and infrastructure has been destroyed. Saving lives over the next 48 hours means creating surgical and trauma care facilities out of whole cloth. Haitian government officials on the BBC this morning asked for "hospital ships."
- Transportation in Haiti has never been easy, whether drivers were trying to get up the paved, winding streets of the Port-au-Prince hills or bouncing their way across the country on brutal dirt roads. In the best of times, heavy transport has been difficult inside the capital and such equipment as bulldozers and backhoes were in scarce supply. Eyewitnesses in Port-au-Prince say they have not seen any heavy equipment in use for rescue operations, and trapped individuals are being dug out of the rubble by barehanded strangers clawing their way through concrete. Cars face challenges moving supplies as roads are filled with debris and hordes of homeless, frightened people.

At this time, the lead U.S. government responders are the U.S. Agency for International Development (which, fortunately, now has a director) and the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM.) Transport, logistics, and situation assessment is being handled by SOUTHCOM. In press conferences this afternoon the leaders of these teams, as well as President Barack Obama, expressed concern, urgency, and confusion regarding the Haitian situation. The confusion stems, of course, from the inability to get a clear picture of the extent of the damage and human security crises in the capital.

The Council on Foreign Relations Global Health Program hopes that our readers find this information useful, and that it facilitates connections between responders. Our readers should feel free to pass this on. Two helpful articles are below for your edification.

Sincerely,



Laurie Garrett
Senior Fellow for Global Health

Doctors mobbed, overwhelmed in "chaotic" Haiti - MSF

13 Jan 2010 16:41:00 GMT

Written by: Katherine Baldwin

http://www.alertnet.org/db/an_art/55076/2010/00/13-164125-1.htm

LONDON (AlertNet) - Haitians injured in a massive earthquake are suffering severe trauma but stretched medical teams can only offer basic first aid care, medical charity [Medecins Sans Frontieres](#) said on Wednesday.

MSF, which employs 800 medical staff in Haiti, said three free medical centres it runs had been badly damaged in the 7.0 magnitude quake that [rocked Haiti](#) on Tuesday and workers were operating out of temporary shelters.

"We're seeing a massive influx of patients but the best we can offer at the moment is first aid care," said Paul McPhun, a member of MSF's emergency management team, on a conference call with journalists. "We're seeing severe trauma, crushed lungs ... the level of care we can provide without the infrastructure is very limited. All the main hospitals we'd normally make referrals to in the immediate vicinity of Port-au-Prince are collapsed or abandoned," added McPhun, who was speaking from Toronto.

MSF is trying to identify a structure to turn into a hospital.

With mobile phone networks largely down, MSF, like other charities, is [struggling to locate all its workers](#). MSF has not accounted for all its staff and local staff members are also concerned about their families.

"The situation is very chaotic. Information is very difficult to gather," McPhun said.

"Last night we had teams working all night, we were mobbed by crowds of people, more because they had desperate needs than because of any animosity. We're all familiar with Haiti and how difficult it is to keep things stable. There are real security concerns," he added.

Haiti is one of the world's poorest countries that is still rebuilding after a series of hurricanes in late 2008 killed hundreds of people and destroyed fragile infrastructure.

Some 70 international MSF volunteers and staff have already been identified and are ready to fly in to Haiti but access is a problem. Aid workers from many charities are descending on the Dominican Republic but it is unclear how they will get to Port-au-Prince. Passenger flights have been suspended. "We don't have a shortage of people willing to go, it's how to get them there," said McPhun.

[Medical relief charity Merlin](#) is sending its own team of four people that expects to be on the ground by Friday.

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Over 100 UN staff missing after deadly Haiti quake

13 Jan 2010 18:12:37 GMT

Source: Reuters

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKN13150745>. CH .2420

* Missing include chief of the U.N. mission in Haiti

* "Some dead, some alive" pulled from headquarters (Adds U.N. humanitarian chief and U.N. spokesman)

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 13 (Reuters) - Several bodies were pulled from the wreckage of the U.N. headquarters in Haiti, which collapsed during a deadly earthquake, and over 100 U.N. staff members were missing, U.N. officials said on Wednesday.

U.N. spokesman Martin Nesirky told reporters that the damage was vast and "tens, if not hundreds of thousands of homes" had been damaged in the earthquake, which struck at 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Alain Le Roy, told reporters that fewer than 10 people, "some dead, some alive," had been extracted from the rubble of the 5-story U.N. headquarters building but more than 100 remained unaccounted for.

Earlier, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the missing included the chief of the U.N. mission in Haiti, Hedi Annabi, and his deputy, but he could not confirm reports that they had died. Annabi was meeting a visiting Chinese police delegation at the time, U.N. officials said.

The U.N. mission, known as MINUSTAH, was headquartered in the former Christopher Hotel in the capital Port-au-Prince, where administrative staff worked. Most of MINUSTAH's 9,000 troops and police were located elsewhere.

U.N. humanitarian affairs chief John Holmes told reporters that 3-3.5 million people were living in areas affected by severe shaking during the earthquake and its aftershocks. It was not clear how many people had died.

"Initial reports suggest a high number of casualties," Holmes said.

The main priority, Holmes said, was search-and-rescue operations to find and extract buried people. He said a Chinese team had arrived at the airport in Port-au-Prince and that two U.S. teams were expected later on Wednesday.

Further search-and-rescue teams were expected to arrive from France, Iceland and the neighboring Dominican Republic in the near future, he said.

Ban said he would send Le Roy's deputy, Edmond Mulet, to Haiti, possibly as early as Friday, and that a U.N. emergency response team would also head there as soon as possible.

The U.N. chief also said \$10 million would be released immediately from the world body's central emergency response fund to assist aid efforts.

Holmes said the United Nations would organize a flash appeal to raise more emergency funds for Haiti over the next few days.

(Reporting by Patrick Worsnip and Louis Charbonneau, editing by Vicki Allen)